

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 MC-02
ACDA-10 IGA-02 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02
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TAGS: EAIR, EAID, UK
SUBJECT: PAN AFRICAN AIR INDUSTRIES (PAAI)

REF: LONDON 2688

FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY TONY GERAGHTY APPEARED IN SUNDAY
TIMES FEBRUARY 20 UNDER HEADLINE "THE COLONEL'S PEACEFUL
AIR FORCE." BEGIN TEXT:

THE COLOURFUL UNITED STATES AIR FORCE COLONEL WHO
HAS BOUGHT A FLEET OF 10 BIG BELFAST FREIGHTER AIRCRAFT
FROM THE RAF FOR USE IN AFRICA, PROMISES THEY WILL NOT
CARRY ANYTHING FOR SOUTH AFRICA, RHODESIA -- OR EVEN THE
CIA.

THOMAS ROBERTSON BOUGHT THE PLANES AS A RESULT OF A
FRONT-PAGE PICTURE STORY LAST YEAR IN THE SUNDAY TIMES.
ROBERTSON, WHOSE RESEMBLANCE TO JOHN WAYNE IS ENHANCED
BY FIVE WARTIME AIR CRASHES, 53 MEDALS AND A PLASTIC
RIGHT EAR, EXPLAINS:

"THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ASKED WASHINGTON FOR AN
UNDERTAKING ON OUR BEHALF THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF
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THESE PLANES BEING USED IN SUPPORT OF RHODESIA OR SOUTH
AFRICA, AND THAT WE WERE NOT CONNECTED WITH THE CIA.
THEY HAD ASSURANCES ON ALL THREE POINTS BEFORE THEY WOULD
ACCEPT OUR TENDER."

THAT TENDER -- FOR A FLEET WHICH ORIGINALLY COST
THE TAXPAYER ABOUT 20 MILLION POUNDS -- WAS NOT THE
HIGHEST. (EXACTLY HOW MUCH HE PAID, THE COLONEL IS NOT

SAYING.) BUT IT WAS THE MOST ACCEPTABLE ON NON-FINANCIAL GROUNDS.

THE REASON IS THAT THE PLANES ARE TO BECOME THE SPEARHEAD OF AN ANGLO-SAXON ECONOMIC PEACE OFFENSIVE IN FRENCH AFRICA, IN UPPER VOLTA, NIGER, MAURITANIA, MALI AND SENEGAL. THE U.S., CANADA AND WEST GERMANY ARE COMBINING TO TRANSFUSE 500 MILLION POUNDS A YEAR INTO THE REGION.

THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM IS TO MOVE CATTLE AND FRESH VEGETABLES OUT OF OUGADOUGOU, UPPER VOLTA, AND TONS OF U.S. PRODUCTS INLAND FROM THE ATLANTIC COAST 500 MILES AWAY. AT PRESENT, MOST OF UPPER VOLTA'S BEEF CATTLE DIES ON THE HOOF ON THEIR WAY TO MARKET, OR SIMPLY DISAPPEAR.

ROBERTSON SAYS THE SCHEME PROMISES TO BE THE MOST EXCITING THING HE HAS EVER DONE. END TEXT.

ARMSTRONG

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